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1. [Avi Benlolo: Ben and Jerry's serves up a cold dish of hate against Israel](#)

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## **Avi Benlolo: Ben and Jerry's serves up a cold dish of hate against Israel**

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### **Body**

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TEL AVIV - The other day, I walked by a convenience store in Tel Aviv that was stocked to the brim with Ben and Jerry's ice cream. No one was buying it. That's probably because most Israelis might be finding it hard to stomach a dessert that has waded into Middle Eastern politics.

Ben and Jerry's has caused a stir in Israel and around the world by announcing that its ice cream will no longer be sold in the "occupied territories." Its website touts important social justice activities like "*climate justice*, marriage equality and peace building" - but boycotting the disputed territories, where Jewish people reside because of their religious connection to the land, is not the same. Some might say it's discriminatory. If we are all promoting freedom, why can't Jewish people live there?

Outraged Israeli politicians called it an acquiescence to the anti-Semitic boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign against the Jewish state. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett went as far as to lodge a formal complaint with the CEO of Unilever, which owns Ben and Jerry's, warning him of possible "serious consequences, legal and otherwise."

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan, wrote to 35 countries that have passed anti-BDS laws, encouraging them to engage in "rapid and determined action ... to counter such discriminatory and anti-Semitic actions," in order to "send an unequivocal message that this will not be tolerated."

In Tel Aviv, I met with Israeli progressive leader and former parliamentarian Stav Shaffir, who told me that unilateral boycott campaigns like this one actually undermine the Israeli left. Rather than working with civil society, and even with the business community, to find effective strategies that advance peace, by embracing the BDS movement, multinational companies end up perpetuating the conflict.

Boycotts build walls, not peace and dialogue. I admire socially responsible companies, including Ben and Jerry's, interest in making the world a better place. In general terms, perhaps rather than the promotion of boycotts, greater investment in projects that promote dialogue, unity and pluralism might result in a more effective strategy for change.

At a time when anti-Semitism is at an all-time high, and when vicious and unfounded campaigns against Jewish communities and the State of Israel are raging widely, greater social responsibility is necessary, on the part of governments and corporations, to ensure their actions are not re-enforcing this climate of hostility.

Given the international community's vociferous condemnation of anti-Semitism, including this week's summit in Canada and last week's in Israel, it would seem prudent to take a measured approach to the Middle East conflict. Anti-Semitism must not be excused as a consequence of events in the Middle East, as no other form of racial and religious discrimination is excused in this manner.

## Avi Benlolo: Ben and Jerry's serves up a cold dish of hate against Israel

It's not just about Ben and Jerry's. This is a significant problem that has grown from anti-Semitic campaigns on university campuses over the last two decades. It must be understood that boycotting Jewish people is never right, and is antithetical to the cause championed by those who espouse social justice and human rights.

A quick look at history reveals that for more than 2,000 years, Jewish people have been marginalized, isolated and boycotted. If this was a legitimate form of social justice, as some might argue, then why do we so rarely see boycotts targeting real human rights abusing countries like Syria, Iran, China and Myanmar?

Anti-boycott legislation in the United States jeopardizes the business affairs of any corporation targeting the Jewish state. Sadly, Ontario's previous government refused to pass such precedent-setting legislation several years ago, when, alongside Tim Hudak and Mike Colle, I presented this groundbreaking opportunity to fight the BDS.

With the global community now recognizing the tsunamic levels of anti-Semitism worldwide, very few leaders are embracing boycotts. In fact, the four Muslim countries that recently signed onto the Abraham Accords have outwardly condemned the BDS movement through accelerated trade with Israel. But this hasn't stopped those who wish Israel harm from continuing on their hateful mission.

The anti-Israel campaigners have attempted to characterize Jewish-Israelis as oppressors, if not the devil itself. Their demonizing and public shaming serves to help legitimize and perpetuate the boycotts, along with violence perpetrated against Jews and the Jewish state.

Ice cream is the least of Israel's problems, as it contends with continued threats from terrorist organizations like Hamas, along with state actors like Iran. But such boycotts are a symptom of the wider problem of anti-Semitism that has seen a frightening resurgence recently.

National Post

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Vivian Bercovici: Ben & Jerry's support for anti-Semitic BDS campaign isn't about social justice(  
<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/vivian-bercovici-ben-jerrys-support-for-anti-semitic-bds-campaign-isnt-about-social-justice> )

Adam Zivo: A University of Toronto student union is going to war in defence of anti-Semitism(  
<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/adam-zivo-a-university-of-toronto-student-union-is-going-to-war-in-defence-of-anti-semitism> ) !@COPYRIGHT=© 2021 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

## Classification

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Avi Benlolo: Ben and Jerry's serves up a cold dish of hate against Israel

(61%); MARRIAGE (55%); walked,convenience,store,stocked,cream,buying !@PERMALINK=  
<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/avi-benlolo-ben-and-jerrys-serves-up-a-cold-dish-of-hate-against-israel> (%)

**Industry:** ICE CREAM (90%); CONVENIENCE STORES (73%)

**Person:** NAFTALI BENNETT (79%)

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